

Hon. Theodore S. Parvin

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any disturbance in it. The General fully endorsed all that he said in praise of his house, and Fleak went to bed again. Very soon the General insisted that he had not done the Camanche justice, and must try it over; the party insisted on hearing him, and the yell, with all of the variations, was given. Fleak again appeared, this time to notify the General that his horse would be at the door, saddled, within a few minutes. The General thanked him politely, and, with his companions, was soon on his way, at three o'clock in the morning, to "Hog Thief Hollow," a few miles from Keokuk.

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HON. THEODORE S. PARVIN.

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THE chiselled marble, the unhewn granite,—nay, "the everlasting hills" themselves, crumble at the touch of Time, and the face of all nature obeys the law of Change impressed upon it by the wearing friction of time. It may take a decade or two to wear out the letters cut by fame or affection on the polished gravestone, a century to crumble the granite in the virgin soil, or a millennium of time to level the mountain; but the features of man, varying with each breath of emotion, like

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By the light, quivering aspen made,"

will register by their changes the flight of days, and sometimes even of moments, and when a short fraction of a century is gone, his face is no longer the same, but another.

Rummaging lately among the literary relics of a by-gone day, we accidentally fell upon the engraving we present (all "unbeknownst" to the original) with this number, and which is an excellent portrait of Hon. Theodore S. Parvin, as he appeared in the year 1848, but bearing but a slight

resemblance to him as he looks to-day, for the simple reason that time has made no exception in his case in the unalterable law of change, as applied to all terrestrial nature.

Theodore Sutton Parvin was born January 15, 1817, in Cumberland county, New Jersey. His father loved "the blue above, and the blue beneath," and in his younger days was a seafaring man, and was the commander of a vessel for a number of years. As his father's calling took him much from home, the early training of Theodore fell mainly to his mother, a devoted Christian lady, of the Presbyterian faith.

In November, 1829, he removed with his father's family to the city of Cincinnati, Ohio, and soon afterward entered Woodward College, at that place, where he soon distanced all competitors, especially leaving some of the foremost a long way behind in mathematics. In the fall of 1833, having successfully and meritoriously passed through the college course, he commenced to be "learned in the law" with the Hon. Timothy Walker, afterward judge of the superior court, who then occupied a corresponding sphere in the field of legal education in Ohio to that at present held by Chancellor Hammond in Iowa. That is to say, a young lawyer was hardly supposed to be well started there without having had the benefit of Judge Walker's preceptorial counsel, as few here have the temerity to venture from the leading-strings of Blackstone till properly balanced by the practical illustrations of Judge Hammond. Uniting the benefits of office study with the more illustrative teachings of the school, he entered the Cincinnati Law School, from which he was graduated in 1837, and immediately admitted to practice.

In the spring of 1838 Robert Lucas, who had been governor of Ohio, was appointed by President Van Buren governor of the young territory of Iowa. Lucas, on his way from his home in the interior of Ohio to assume his new office, tarried a while in Cincinnati to purchase a territorial

library, and, as may be supposed, to restock his carpet-sack with shirts and collars; for Iowa was then in the far, uncertain, and uncultivated West, as distant from haberdashers and gentlemen's furnishing establishments as from book-stores and libraries. Of course the old and new governor had friends in the metropolis of Ohio, and was a lion among them. At the tea-table of a mutual friend the Governor (one of whose practical mottoes through life ever was, that the first impulse was the best, and the first decision most correct) met young Parvin, and was so struck with the manners and conversation of the youth that he nominated him off-hand as his chief-of-staff, like Napoleon promoting a soldier for good behavior on the field of battle. Parvin accepted the post of private secretary, and accompanied the Governor to Burlington, then the temporary capital of Iowa. The stern Governor, from that day to his death, never regretted having chosen the stripling lawyer as his confidential secretary, and never faltered or wavered in his affection for him. He retained the office of Governor's secretary until the Governor promoted him to that of prosecuting attorney for one of three districts into which Iowa was then divided, when Parvin took up his residence at Muscatine, at that time known as Bloomington. At the end of two years he resigned the position of prosecuting attorney, to be elected for three consecutive terms judge of the probate court. Previous to this he had held the office of secretary of the legislative council, during the session of 1840-41.

Upon the organization of the United States District Court for the district of Iowa, Judge Parvin was appointed its clerk, a position he held for ten years, embracing the entire term of Judge Dyer's service, and until the latter's death, in 1855.

In 1856, Judge Parvin was elected register of the state land office, and therefore, in the second year of Judge Love's term on the United States District Bench, he resigned the clerkship of that court.

Indebted to the public school system of Ohio for a liberal education, it is no wonder that Mr. Parvin has always been an enthusiast in the cause of public education. He brought order to the free schools of Muscatine out of chaos, when the present school code was adopted in Iowa, serving as president of the school board of that city.

At the initial steps for the organization of the State University, in 1854, the legislature recognized the value of his counsel and experience in educational affairs by electing him one of its trustees. He was again elected trustee by the board of education in 1858, but resigned the next year, upon his election as "Curator and Librarian," a compound title, which was accompanied by all the powers of president of the university except the use of the title, just as "Lord Protector" meant king with Cromwell. But at the end of 1859 a president *de nomine* as well as *de facto* was appointed, and Mr. Parvin exchanged the title of "Curator and Librarian" for that of "Professor of Natural History," which chair he held for eight years. We find him, during his university career, at different times filling various chairs—those of Geology, Physical Geography, Botany, Physiology, Zoölogy, Meteorology, and Political Economy—besides teaching such branches as Ancient and Modern History, Ancient Geography, History of Modern Civilization, &c., which do not seem to have been considered sufficiently abstruse of themselves to entitle the teacher thereof to the title of professor. Sometimes he filled two or three chairs at a time; for whenever a chair was temporarily vacant, through sickness or unavoidable absence of its proper occupant, the professor whose varied information supplied every deficiency was at hand, and the constant word was, "Send for Parvin."

Political Economy was the last chair filled by Prof. Parvin. Pending the general election of 1870, party rancor was more than usually developed in the political canvass at the seat of the university (which is putting it in quite the superlative degree), and the bitterness then and there en-

gendered was blown over the old board fence (for this was before our *iron* age of university fences) which then shut out the common herd from the university campus. Some of the board of trustees seem to have decided that, since politics raged so uproariously outside the university, they would henceforth have none within, and, on an extravagant impulse, voted away the chair and the professor of Political Economy.

Since that time Prof. Parvin has devoted himself almost exclusively to the promotion and extension of the masonic order, of which we may say he was the founder in Iowa, having assisted in the formation of the first lodge, and of which he was for a long time the chief officer. For twenty-nine years, and ever since its institution, he has been Grand Secretary of the Grand Lodge of Iowa, except one year, when he was nominally relieved of this duty to enable him to be elevated to the more exalted, but not more responsible, office of Grand Master. Since early manhood he has been a zealous devotee of Masonry, shirking no labor, shrinking from no responsibility, evading no duty, which the vows of that order impose on its most exalted members. To recount the offices he has held, and the honors he has won in Freemasonry, would be but little short of writing a history of the order in Iowa.

In May, 1843, Prof. Parvin was married to Miss Agnes McCully. They have six children, two daughters and four sons, the elder daughter and eldest son being married. The elder daughter was one of the first three ladies to take the degree of A. B. in the state university, and, so far as we know, they were the first females to take this degree in the United States.

In 1850, Prof. Parvin united with the Presbyterian church, in which body he is as honored and useful as in any other walk of life. For long years he was the superintendent of the Presbyterian Sunday School in Muscatine, and when he removed his residence to Iowa City the same position was

thrust upon him here, and he holds it still, by virtue of the relentless decrees of pastor, elders, and scholars.

Besides acting as an officer in the school board of Iowa City, Prof. Parvin served for a short time as superintendent of schools for Johnson county, to which office he was elected, without solicitation, by his political opponents, which is a tribute to worth the simple statement of which is more valuable than a studied eulogy, pronounced in the most honeyed rhetoric. While serving as superintendent, his visits lent new attractions to the school room. The little girls and boys would carry to their parents at home the pleasant words of encouragement that Mr. Parvin said, and be anxious to hear him again.

Prof. Parvin was one of the institutors of the State Historical Society, in January, 1857, serving as a member of the first and subsequent boards of curators, until December, 1863, when he was elected corresponding secretary, to which latter office he was re-elected in 1864—his second term expiring in December, 1865. In 1865 he was again elected a member of the board of curators, and in 1866 one of the vice presidents of the society. During the two years he was corresponding secretary he edited the ANNALS OF IOWA, and the popularity of the work when in his hands is best told by stating the fact that two of the eight numbers issued by him are held at a premium of three dollars a copy, and are unpurchasable at that. He has always been, since its establishment, an active friend and liberal benefactor of the society—the number and value of his gifts to it far exceeding those of all other contributors.

Prof. Parvin's residence has been in Iowa City since 1860. He has an elegant "cottage by the"—Iowa river and the railroad track. The murmurs of the river floating on the still summer evening air probably inclines one to poesy, but the engine bell ding-donging through the middle of a five o'clock morning slumber would most likely give occasion, in a profane temperament, for the harshest kind of prose.

Here, amid domestic quiet, within hearing of the careless whistle of the oriole on the one hand, and the buzz of city commerce on the other, surrounded by terraces of books, Prof. Parvin devotes himself to the collection of materials for history, and drives a facile pen in embodying the records of ancient Masonry and in the editorial conduct of *The Evergreen*.

As may be inferred from what has been said, Prof. Parvin has an engaging presence and winning manners, and is not deficient in the attributes necessary for a successful party manager, which he would have been had he devoted more time to politics and less to science. In early life an accident entailed upon him permanent lameness, which turned his inclinations away from outside sports and out of door occupations toward the cultivation of letters and the study of books. It is thus that what appear at the time the greatest misfortunes and calamities, are often, under Heaven, converted into blessings for us, and the sources of happiness.

These are but a few notes in the life of a useful public man, whose name has been familiar to the people of Iowa, in politics, in religion, in educational affairs, and in benevolent enterprise, from her earliest settlement to the present time. As he is but little past the meridian of life, his record is as yet incomplete, and it is to be hoped a long extension of his life will afford many incidents and events worthy the attention of his future biographer, who will also have to supply many omissions by the present writer.

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VAN BUREN COUNTY.

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THE old settlers of Van Buren county recently effected a permanent organization, under the following constitution:—

ARTICLE I. This society shall be called the "Pioneer Association of Van Buren county, Iowa."



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